



RCA Consumer e-News

Regulatory Commission of Alaska
Consumer Protection & Information Section
Winter 2020

November is National Veterans and Military Families Month

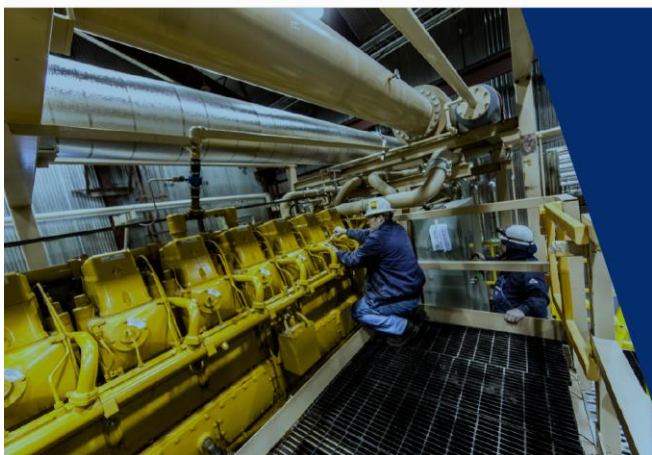
- Calling a military member station abroad? Placing a call from your landline telephone in the U.S. to a cellular phone in another country may result in additional surcharges. [Learn more.](#)
- Military service members relocating may be able to cancel cellular telephone contracts. [Learn more.](#)
- Are you a veteran financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic? Need assistance with rent, mortgage, or utility bills? The Alaska 2-1-1 is your one-stop resource. [Learn more.](#)
- Veterans, military spouses, or caregivers get priority service from the Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development when seeking employment, apprenticeship opportunities, or on-the job-training programs. [Learn more](#)
- Spot and avoid scams and unfair, deceptive, and fraudulent business practices. Check out the Federal Trade Commission's [Military Consumer Dashboard](#).

REGULATORY COMMISSION OF ALASKA

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do you know how your utility rates are set?

As a state agency that regulates public utilities, the Regulatory Commission of Alaska is tasked with ensuring that customers receive adequate, safe, and reliable public utility services at just, fair, and reasonable rates, terms, and conditions.



Power plants, distribution facilities, and service lines that deliver electricity, heat, and water to your home and businesses are continually maintained to ensure they always function properly. The costs to operate and maintain those facilities are recovered through the utility's base rates.

Before a regulated public utility can change its rates, the law requires the utility to file a rate case review before the Commission. A rate case allows scrutiny of costs incurred and determines permanent rates based on evidence.

The utility also recovers variable costs through a surcharge mechanism (for example, [Cost-of-Power Adjustment](#) for electric utilities and [Gas Cost Adjustment](#) for natural gas utilities). In most cases, those are adjusted automatically outside of a full rate review.



Exemptions ([AS 42.05.711](#))

There are public utilities, however, that do not need RCA approval to change their rates. For example, city-owned utilities, deregulated electric cooperatives that successfully deregulated through [election proceedings](#), and utilities that do not gross more than \$50,000 in annual revenues.

For city-owned utilities, the local government is the ratemaking authority; for deregulated electric or telephone cooperatives, it's the cooperative's the board of directors.



get help with your energy bills

If you're unable to pay your home energy bill, you may be able to get help. The State of Alaska's Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) opened back up October 1, 2020.

Am I eligible for LIHEAP?

LIHEAP assists households with income at or below 150% of the federal poverty income guidelines, who have a minimum of \$200 in out-of-pocket heating costs per year and meet all other eligibility criteria. Example of the current income guidelines:

No. of people in home	Monthly Gross Income
1	\$1,993.75
2	\$2,693.75
3	\$3,393.75
4	\$4,093.75
5	\$4,793.75
6	\$5,493.75

The benefit is a one-time payment to the household's vendor, sent to the vendor, and applied to the customer's account as a credit.

How do I apply for LIHEAP?

If you would like to apply for LIHEAP assistance, you should complete an [application form](#), provide a copy of your identification card along with proof of income, and a copy of heating and electric bills, and send it to the [Department of Health & Social Services LIHEAP Office](#).

How are benefits determined?

LIHEAP uses a point system to determine award amounts. Multiple factors including the community the applicant resides in, how they heat their home, the size of their heated living space, their income, and whether or not an elder, disabled person, or child under the age of 6 reside in the home; impact the number of points a household receives. For more information, visit the [State of Alaska's Heating Assistance Program website](#).

How do I check the status of my application?

To check the status of your application or find out your grant amount, you may contact the 24-hour hotline at (907) 269-5777 or (888) 804-6330 (outside Anchorage).



employee spotlight

Brian Beard

This is Brian's 19th year with the RCA! Brian started working for the agency in 2001 as an administrative clerk in Tariffs Section and later became a Law Office Assistant. In 2008, Brian was promoted to manage the Records & Filing Section (R&F). In this role, Brian analyzes and determines completeness of applications for certificates of public convenience and necessity, formal and informal complaints, and complex legal documents for compliance with Commission orders as well as statutes and regulations.

Brian played an integral part of the RCA's transformation to an electronic environment and has watched the document management evolve over the years. Brian is a dedicated leader who provides extensive training to staff members and works to continuously improve and enhance the records center operations to better serve the commission's internal and external customers.

During the RCA public meeting held October 14, 2020, Chairman Bob Pickett also recognized and honored the following staff for their milestone service with the State of Alaska.

- Connie Peterson, 25 years
- Jay Layne, 15 years
- Antony Scott, 15 years
- Stephen McAlpine, 15 years

Chugach Electric Association, Inc. has completed its acquisition of the Municipal Light & Power and began its combined operations November 4, 2020. Customer service centers are available at:

Chugach South Campus
5601 Electron Drive
Anchorage, AK 99518
Monday through Friday
8:00 am to 5:00 pm

Chugach North Campus
1120 East 1st Avenue
Anchorage, AK 99501
Monday through Friday
7:30 am to 5:30 pm

Phone – Member Services
(907) 563-7366
Monday through Friday
7:30 am to 5:30 pm